



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 26 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

APPROVED MINUTES

The Special Retreat Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **October 4, 2010**, at Homeboy Industries 130 W. Bruno Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Dr. La-Doris McClanay
Patricia Curry	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Susan F. Friedman	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Dr. Sunny Kang	Martha Trevino Powell
Helen A. Kleinberg	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Rev. Cecil L. Murray	Sandra Rudnick
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I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 9:10 a.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- **October 4, 2010**

Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Friedman, the agenda for October 4, 2010, was unanimously approved.

IV. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Chair Curry thanked Commissioners and Committee members who have done a wonderful job collaborating with each other as well as with the County Departments and other children's entities that they work with.

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She extended a Special thanks to the following Commissioners/Committees:

- The Faith-Based, Childhood Wellness and the Relative Care Committees for their joint efforts and collaboration with DCFS
- Commissioner Friedman for heading the Protocol for Probation Youth Fatalities Workgroup
- Commissioner Biondi for her diligent work with the Probation Department
- Commissioner Kleinberg for her extensive work through the DCFS' Visitation Committee and Committee's accomplishments.

Action Taken:

Chair Curry's opening remarks were received and filed.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. DCFS and Commission Joint Efforts

**Trish Ploehn, Director
DCFS**

Director Ploehn reported the following:

- DCFS and Casey Family Programs have been working for several months on a document titled, "Keeping Our Children Safe, Moving Forward Together," which will be released in November 2010. This public release is intended to ensure that everyone involved with the safety and well-being of children in Los Angeles County is up to date on findings. The document focuses on two areas, Prevention and Transition Age Youth (TAY).
- DCFS has started to meticulously review and analyze data on all child fatalities that occurred on or after January 1, 2008, the date in which SB 39 was enacted. Since then, there have been approximately 1,100 child fatalities in Los Angeles County. This number includes all children between the ages of 0-17 who died in Los Angeles County regardless of circumstance and/or cause of death or association with DCFS.

In reviewing the 1,100 fatality cases, DCFS discovered that it did not have data on the majority of these cases. Therefore, DCFS has decided to focus on 434 of the 1,100 cases that have had some contact with the Department. DCFS is currently gathering aggregate data on the 434 children who died. Aggregate data includes: 1) the date of the last contact with DCFS, 2) the length of time from the last contact with DCFS to the child's death, 3) the child's gender, and 4) cause of death.

Of the 1,100 child fatalities, 107 were cases of reasonable suspicion; and of these 107 cases, 64 had DCFS contact. Recently DCFS released an additional 34 cases of reasonable suspicion, raising the total number of SB 39 cases with DCFS contact to 98.

- SB 39 states that anytime there is reasonable suspicion that a child died as a result of abuse or neglect, Part A of SB 39 takes effect. Part A requires that every county child welfare agency completes and submits a document to the State of California indicating that there is a reasonable suspicion that a child's death was the result of abuse or neglect. However, since November 2009, the State asked child welfare agencies to cease submission of documents pursuant to Part A of SB 39 unless the fatality was a confirmed SB 39 case.
- DCFS, Law Enforcement, and the Coroner's Department are the only three entities that can determine if a child fatality is an SB39 case and DCFS is the reporting and record keeping agency. An SB 39 case may or may not have DCFS history.
- Any member of the public can contact DCFS and request basic information on child fatalities that fall under the SB 39, reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect. Law permits the release of the five following pieces of information, only when such requests are made:
 1. Gender
 2. Date of death
 3. Age of the deceased child
 4. Whether or not there is an open DCFS investigation
 5. Whether the child died in a foster home or in an out-of a home care placement
- The aggregate data that DCFS is compiling on the 434 child fatalities will be disseminated to the 18 DCFS office locations. The rationale behind this information sharing is to engage all DCFS offices, and to subsequently develop a specific plan to address the needs of any given community based on the needs and challenges that each community faces. Results of this data analysis, specifically the 107 SB 39 cases, will also be permeated through the department to relay information on fatality patterns or trends and the age groups of the children associated with them. For example, of the 434 child fatalities with DCFS contact, 40 of them were two-years old or younger; the second largest group was 15-17 years olds whose deaths were attributed to gangs.
- DCFS is notified anytime a child dies in Los Angeles County, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the child's death or if the child has had contact with DCFS. Child fatalities are also reported to the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) National Center on Child Fatality Review (NCFR).

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Director Ploehn added the following:

- Several jurisdictions around the nation have opened up the Juvenile Dependency and Delinquency Courts to the public. This has resulted in a very positive impact and has increased accountability. Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Courts, Judge Michael Nash, is in favor of transparency in the court system and new legislation to enable “*openness and accountability*.” DCFS has developed a legislative proposal to enable “*openness and accountability*” in the courts which is currently being vetted throughout the County. Partners supporting DCFS include the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA). Proposal is in the preliminary stages and will be presented to the Board when information gathering and research is complete.
- DCFS has only three permanency units currently available for older youth between the ages 16-18. DCFS has planned to add an additional eight units in the near future. Each permanency unit has six workers who service approximately 15 youth. Adding the additional eight permanency units would result in achieving permanency for approximately 720 youth.
- First 5 LA addresses co-sleeping and is working on a proposal to receive additional funds needed to get the word out to the public on the dangers associated with co-sleeping.
- SB39 data cannot be provided to the Commission unless a request is submitted by the Commission.

Director Ploehn requested the Commission’s help in analyzing the aggregate data that is currently being analyzed by DCFS to determine if any systemic issues, patterns/trends can be identified which attribute to child fatalities.

Chair Curry noted that in a recent meeting with County Counsel Andrea Sheridan Ordin, she and Commissioner Olivas discussed data sharing relative to child fatalities. It was suggested that instead of having multiple entities pulling data regarding child fatalities and receiving different information, it would be helpful if DCFS could produce “*datasets*” on a regular basis providing, thereby providing same information to all requestors. It was suggested that perhaps the Commission could form an ad hoc workgroup headed by Commissioner Olivas to speak with the Board Deputies regarding this endeavor.

Action Taken:

After discussion, on motion of Commissioner Kang, seconded by Commissioner Friedman, and unanimously carried (Commissioners Murray and Rudnick being absent), the Commission agreed to:

1. Develop a Committee comprised of Commissioners Kang, Kleinberg, and Savelle to analyze aggregate data with DCFS and ICAN of the 107 SB 39 cases to determine if any systemic issues, patterns/trends can be identified which contributed to child fatalities, as requested by DCFS Director Ploehn. This workgroup will be headed by Commission Kleinberg.
2. Develop a Committee comprised of Commissioners Olivas, Sorkin and Trevino Powell to work in conjunction with the Board Deputies on the development of “datasets” on child fatality information.
3. Request First 5LA to convene Department Leaders to gather recommendations for change to the child welfare system through roundtable discussions at Commission meetings or by working with the Chief Executive Office Service Integration Branch.
4. Develop a proposal from findings and incorporate recommendations from County Departments.

Director Ploehn noted that another DCFS priority is aging-out children, as set forth by a Board directive, the fourth priority of Self-Sufficiency. The Commission expressed interest in developing an ad hoc committee to look at issues affecting Transitional Age Youth (TAY) and assisting DCFS with this endeavor.

Chair Curry noted that she has been working with the CEO on self-sufficiency.

Action Taken:

After discussion, on motion of Commissioner Kang, seconded by Commissioner Sorkin (Commissioners Murray and Rudnick being absent), the Commission agreed to:

1. Conduct a series of roundtables discussions on issues regarding TAY
2. Provide the TAY Committee with an update of findings
3. Brainstorm and engage discussions with DCFS and leaders of other Departments
4. Conduct focus groups with youth.

**2. Discussion and approval of the Commission’s
Fiscal Year 2009/10 Annual Report**

Chair

The Commission reviewed the Fiscal Year 2009/10 Annual report and made the following revisions:

- Added the following cc’s to the letter to the Board of Supervisors: **DCEO, Health and Mental Health Service** and **Children’s and Health Deputies**
- Page 1, under Supervisor Don Knabe Fourth Supervisorial District
Revised to read: Ann Franzen, Sandra Rudnick, Tina Pedersen, ~~M.S.W~~ **LCSW**
(Resigned 12/2009)
- Page 9, under COUNTY BODIES REPRESENTATION
Revised to read: “Countywide Gangs and Violence Reductions (Monrovia-Duarte **& Pacoima** Workgroups)”

- Page 11, 1st paragraph, 3rd sentence
Changed to read: “. . . relevant to the problem, accessible, **and** available during . . .”
- Page 11, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence
Revised to read: “~~It~~ **The Committee** utilized the recommendations . . .”
- Page 11, 3rd paragraph, 3rd sentence
Changed to read: “~~This~~ **DCFS** demonstrated common values . . .”
- Page 11, 4th paragraph, 3rd sentence
Revised to read: “. . . three year **pilot** project to promote . . .”
- Page 11, 4th paragraph, 4th sentence
Revised to read: “. . . treatment established ~~by~~ **to assist** the Department of Public Social Services.”
- Page 16, 1st paragraph, 1st sentence
Revised to read: “The plan, which was adopted on June 10, **2010** embraced . . .”
- Page 12, 3rd paragraph, 3rd sentence
Revised to read: “The **First 5 LA** Commission and staff . . .”
- Page 13, last paragraph, 4th sentence
Revised to read: “The conclusion of the **first year** evaluation reads. . .”
- Page 18, under header
Revised to read as follows: *Transitional*~~al~~ Age Youth
- Page 14, 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence
Revised to read: “In March **2010**, the CEO . . .”
- Page 14, 2nd paragraph, last sentence
Revised to read: “It is still unclear whether the THP Plus Program and Chafee Funding will be cut further in 2009/10 **2010/11**.”
- Page 16, 1st paragraph, 1st sentence
Revised to read: “~~During the first six months of 2010~~ **Using a round table forum**, the Commissioners. . .”
- Page 19, under the recommendations 4
Revised to read: “4. DCFS should ~~to~~ continue to focus on working with DMH, DHS, and PH **Public Health** to identify.”

Commission Sorkin offered a motion to revise the Fiscal Year 2009/10 Annual Report as follows:

Page 15, 2nd paragraph, last sentence

Revised to read: The list of best ~~social-work~~ practices was shared with the training section of DCFS, the DCFS Permanency Committee, and DCFS staff who is working on DCFS' new strategic plan.

Action Taken:

After discussion, Commissioner Sorkin's aforementioned motion failed by the following vote:

Ayes: (2) Commissioners: Sorkin and Powell

Noes: (10) Commissioners: Friedman, Olivas, Savelle, Biondi, Franzen, Kang, Kleinberg, McClaney, Williams, and Curry.

Absent: (2) Commissioners Murray and Rudnick

After further discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, the 2009-2010 Annual Report ([copy on file](#)) was unanimously approved as revised.

3. Discussion and approval of a letter to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on recommendations for a Protocol for reporting Probation Youth Fatalities to the Board

Susan Friedman

Action Taken:

After discussion, on motion of Commissioner Savelle, seconded by Commissioner Olivas (Commissioners Murray and Rudnick being absent), the letter to the Board on recommendations for a Protocol for reporting Probation Youth Fatalities to the Board ([copy on file](#)) was unanimously approved with the following changes:

▪ Page 2, under recommendation number 4.

Changed to read: "Establish a log that is similar in nature to the fatality log that is kept by DCFS which includes: ~~Youth's~~ youth's first name and first letter of the last name, date of birth, date of death, referral, date, Service Planning Area (SPA) Office, SPA number, Probation Status, Placement Type, Mode of Death, Cause of Death, Child Fatality Cause, Circumstances, Ethnicity, Race, and ZIP Code. The log ~~Log~~ should be reviewed quarterly and reported to the Chief Probation Officer;

Establish a log that is similar in nature to the fatality log that is kept by DCFS which includes: youth's first name and first letter of the last name, date of birth, date of death, referral date, Service Planning Area (SPA) Office, SPA number, Probation Status, Placement Type, Mode of Death, Cause of Death, Child Fatality Cause, Circumstances, Ethnicity, Race, and ZIP Code. The logs should be reviewed quarterly and reported to the Chief Probation Officer;

The Commission recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:01 p.m.

The Commission reconvened at 12:37 p.m.

4. Discussion on Commission Direction for Coming Year

All

Standing Committees

The Relative Care Committee will:

- Continue to support the Kinship Coalition.
- Attempt to secure funding from the Title IV-E Waiver for relative caregivers
- Address issue on the number of nurses within DCFS.

The Faith-Based Committee will:

- Continue to work the faith based community in the Service Planning Areas (SPAs).
- Visit the various homes of worship to find out what services they are providing or what projects they want to implement

The Childhood Wellness Committee will:

- Continue dialogue with DCFS on the continuation of the *Healthy Lifestyle Trainings*
- Review issues surrounding children with asthma.

Commission expressed the following concerns:

- Follow-up with the Board of Supervisors on recommendations given by the Commission.

Chair Curry noted that follow-up to Commission recommendations is raised during the quarterly meetings between Commission Officers and Board.

- The Commission is concerned about the amount of funding on data systems when there is no interface between the various departments that serve children.
- The state of California recently mandated that Probation must enter data into CWS/CMS. Additionally, if the Probation's data is not entered into CWS/CMS in the allotted timeframe, the state will reduce its CHAFEE funding each subsequent month that it is not entered. Unfortunately, any such decreases in funding will only affect youth.

Action Taken:

No action was taken.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 1:37 p.m.